Hip Fracture

Fractures that occur in the upper third of the femur bone are called hip fractures. This type of fracture is common in older adults and is usually caused by falling. Assessment of the patient with a broken hip will reveal shortening and external rotation of the affected leg, muscle spasms, and pain. A patient may be placed in Buck’s traction for 24 to 48 hours before undergoing surgery, in an effort to stabilize the patient and reduce muscle spasms. Patients should be monitored closely for avascular necrosis, or death of bone tissue, resulting from insufficient blood supply to the affected area.



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Assessment

External Rotation
Rotating Externally away from the body
Assessment of the patient with a broken hip will reveal external rotation of the leg. When the leg is externally rotated, the foot will be in a horizontal position with the toes pointing outward.

Muscle Spasms
Muscle-man Spaceship
The patient may experience muscle spasms in the affected leg, especially when attempting to move the fractured hip.

Shortened Leg
Shorter Leg
The patient’s leg will also be noticeably shorter on the affected side.

Pain
Pain-bolt
The patient will report pain and tenderness in the affected leg/hip. Pain should be managed using analgesic medication.

Interventions

Buck's Traction
Buck Tractor
Buck’s traction is a type of skin traction used to immobilize and maintain alignment of the lower extremities. This type of traction may be used for 24 to 48 hours prior to surgery in an effort to stabilize the patient and decrease muscle spasm.

Analgesics
A-nail-Jay-Z
Pain management is an important aspect of patient care. Analgesics should be administered to reduce pain caused by muscle spasms prior to surgery and again after surgery to manage post-op pain.

Surgery
Surgeon
Surgery to repair a fractured hip may involve internal fixation, partial, or total hip replacement. See the Picmonic “Hip Surgery” card for a more detailed description of post-operative patient care considerations.

Considerations

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Avascular Necrosis

In-vessel Necrosis-crow

Complications of a fracture hip include avascular necrosis. This condition causes death of bone tissue due to insufficient blood supply to the affected area.

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